

Africa- God's suffering servant



Prophet Jim Smith

Introduction

Twenty five years ago, God called me to be a prophet to the Nations. It wasn't a job I was looking for, nor one I needed. I was employed as an evangelist, had a house, a salary, a wife, a lovely family and I belonged to a good Church. But God called, and I obeyed. I gave up my work as an evangelist, which meant no house, car or income. I had no contacts in the wider international Church. I felt very alone. But God was faithful, and over the years, my family have always been housed, clothed and fed. I also found opportunities for me to speak in the world. Slowly I visited country after country, speaking what I believed to be God's word and learning my calling.

Finally, almost by accident, I came to Africa. Here God called me again –“I want you to raise up prophets in this Continent.” I didn't know where to begin, but slowly a work has grown. Then God began to speak to me about the Continent of Africa:-

“I want to show you how I have been preparing Africa over the centuries to serve me. Then you can tell my people what I have been doing, and what I want to do.”

As he showed me his heart, I became gripped by his vision for Africa, his love for Africa, and his plan for this continent, which he has been preparing for two thousand years. What is that plan?

Africa helps - protects the child Jesus

Satan has tried to destroy Jesus from the very beginning of his earthly life. No sooner was the birth of Jesus announced, than Satan was manipulating his agents to kill the baby – **“Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”** Although King Herod showed interest in the place of the birth of King Jesus, (Matthew 2:8) the Magi were warned of his evil plans:-

“And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.” (Matthew 2:12)

Then Africa came to the help of Jesus:-

“When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt.” (Matthew 2:13)

The enemy took his revenge very quickly:-

“When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under.” (Matthew 2:16)

The enemy also took his revenge on Africa, and the continent has been suffering ever since Jesus was helped.

Africa helps – carrying the cross

Having failed to destroy Jesus at birth, Satan set about preventing Jesus getting to Calvary. He tested and tempted Jesus, (Luke 4:1-11) caused obstructions, and planned murder. (Mark 3:6) On each occasion he was thrown back. In Judas, he thought he had found the right man, but again he failed. (Mark 14:10) But he never gave up. He tries to prevent Jesus getting to Calvary, and at that point Africa helped him again:-

“And a certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.” (Mark 15:21)

The enemy has been taking his revenge on Africa ever since it helped Jesus to the place of salvation.

Africa - a chosen continent

In two great times of trial, God looked for a Continent to protect and help his Son. Africa was that chosen continent. When Herod tried to kill the baby, it was Africa that was chosen to help. When Jesus was struggling to get to the hill of Calvary, Africa was chosen to help. This great privilege has brought with it much suffering. Satan has always tried to destroy or take his revenge on those who stand with Jesus. We have seen this again and again in the history of faith, and very clearly in the spiritual history of Africa. Satan always intends everything for harm, but God had not forgotten Africa. He called on Africa to help his son, and in the process the continent became one of the most blessed Continents in the history of the world. In the following centuries, Africa suffered for this act of service, and is suffering still. But in these centuries of pain, Africa has become God’s suffering servant, and through this process has become ready to serve him yet again for the third and decisive time.

Africa - Isaiah beings understanding

In order to understand this, we must look to the Bible, and one of the clearest descriptions of what the suffering servant can expect is to be found in Isaiah. Here is the passage we need to study:-

**Just as there were many who were appalled at him—
his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being
and his form marred beyond human likeness—
so he will sprinkle many nations,
and kings will shut their mouths because of him.
For what they were not told, they will see,
and what they have not heard, they will understand.**

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

**Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.**

**He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. (Isaiah 52:14-53:9)**

*** Key verse. 52:14 “His appearance was disfigured.”**

The Bible teaches us that this disfigurement was a prophetic vision of what would happen to Jesus. In the New Testament we learn that the body of Jesus was damaged by scourging, and broken on the Cross. All his natural beauty was torn away.

“Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, “Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?” (Matt 26:67-68)

“But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.” (Mt.27:26)

They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. (Mt 27:30)

“When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.”(Mt. 27:35)

The same has been true for Africa. Again and again outsiders have divided up the land as suited their economic, political or spiritual purposes. The natural resources have been taken to other lands, and the humans made slaves for trade. Even today, politics damages the lands, destroying economies, roads, schools and lives. Still, Africa is being broken and it seems almost impossible to prevent it. Not all this breaking has been from outside. Africa herself has torn and broken herself, in endless tribal conflicts, which still go on today. Satan has a long memory, and is still taking his revenge on this Continent.

Key verse 53:3 “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering.”

Africa and African peoples have been despised for as long as they have had any contact with other Continents. The people have been treated as cattle, as sub-human, as not having the intellectual capacity of other lands. Cartoons and books have generated very negative attitudes to Africans. Words have been used to describe African people which are ugly in their content, but many have used such words as a convenient way of labelling a people, and even a whole continent.

African culture has always been considered either sub western, or something to be exploited. Western governments have long used African leaders to serve their own political ends. By controlling these leaders, they have acted out their own purposes, and they are still doing it, even if it is now much more hidden.

Western banks and businesses have ensnared Africa in debt, with little awareness of the disasters that this brings on African people – on the poor, the powerless, and the helpless. Western people have failed to understand the nature of Africa, thinking that what is good for the West will be good for them.

Until recently, little attempt has been made to see things from an African point of view, and from an African framework. Little attempt has been made to listen, to understand, to move within the culture. Africa has been, and is despised. It has many wonderful things to give to the world, but the world has mostly spent its experience of Africa in raping the land, murdering, enslaving or despising the people. The land and the people have been humiliated, rejected, broken and treated with scorn.

The soul of Africa cries out in pain for all this treatment. The blood cries from the ground. The good things of the land have been ignored. The blessing this continent could have brought to the world has been ignored. Pain and suffering have been heaped on Africa. The very soul of the Continent is in agony and suffering.

How similar this is to the experience of Jesus. He came to offer good things – forgiveness, new beginnings, healing, and freedom from evil, sin, sickness and death. (John 10:10. Mark 4:35 to 5:43) He refused to be imprisoned by the religion of the day, but opened the way to a fuller experience of God. He showed all the blessings of God in his own body, yet the world broke him to pieces, ignoring him, ridiculing him, threatening him, trapping him and murdering him.

He too was despised and rejected, familiar with suffering. He was like a lamb to the slaughter. Africa also has been a lamb to the slaughter. He was full of the power and the glory of God. Many in Africa have been and still are full of the glory of God. Yet he was rejected and broken. Africa too has been rejected and broken.

AFRICA - How should the servant react?

As we face and answer this question, we come very close to the heart of God, and will be able to make sense of the suffering. Many have never faced this question from a prophetic perspective before. Many know of the sufferings of Africa, but haven't realised that this has been part of the price Africa has paid to be God's servant. Consequently, for so many, the suffering seems to have been in vain. So how should we approach the suffering of Africa? How can we handle such a deep and painful experience, and find our way through it to the purposes of God?

Suffering servant - the Lord's delight

"Here is my servant who I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight,"
(Isaiah .42:1)

At the very beginning of the teaching on suffering, God encourages us – **those who suffer for him are a delight to him.** One of the privileges of being the suffering servant is to be the Lord's delight. Those who suffer for his name are specially blessed to him, and specially blessed by him.

The two thousand years of being the suffering servant has made Africa a place and a people in whom God delights.

African Christians have been slow to grasp this truth, and so they have either become angry and bitter at the suffering, or disillusioned and hopeless. This will not bring the third blessing. Africa has blessed the Lord Jesus twice. Now is the time to add to that blessing, by accepting the position of the suffering servant, and the consequences which this brings with it.

It takes a great amount of courage to do this. It is so much easier to become angry, bitter, aggressive or listless. These are the things which the enemy wants to raise up in us. They are the "evil things which come out of the heart of a man." (Mark 7:15) They are the deceits of the deceitful heart. (Jeremiah 17:9) They are the rising up of the old self, (Mark 8:34) which says "I want power, privilege, blessing, opportunity and wealth. I want an easy time." Jesus wants to put a new heart in us, his people. (Ezekiel 11:18-19) This will open up a new understanding of our position as suffering servants.

Being chosen as the suffering servant is a blessing, a hope, a privilege and a joy. It is being allowed to be the Lord's delight, a Continent which he loves, and which he will use again. The African Church has a clear grasp of its origins -it served Jesus. It must make the next connection, and take up its servant privilege. This brings very exciting possibilities, as my word for Africa suggests:-

"God has raised a banner over Africa.

The banner of love, of freedom, of service.

"In this Continent" says the Lord "I will show my power."

(Word to prophet Jim Smith.)

Suffering servant - the privilege of suffering.

“To this you were called, for Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.” (1 Peter 2:21)

This verse was originally written to slaves, which in its own way makes it a special verse for Africa. But it sums up the whole history of the Continent. Christ has left us an example that we should suffer with him. In our materialistic world, the privilege of being allowed to suffer “for the sake of the Name” (Acts 5:41) has been lost in many places. But it is an honour to suffer, to bear the pain and sorrow for belonging to God. As we do this, so we share his pain, and are able to minister to his heart. This will express itself in personal and communal suffering and pain.

God has allowed Africa to be his suffering servant for two thousand years. If we can take hold of this truth, then our minds will be open to another question:-what will God do through his suffering servant? If this has happened for two thousand years, what has God got planned for the future?

Suffering servant - the perfection of suffering

“Although he was a son, he learnt obedience from what he suffered.”
(Hebrews 5:8)

Suffering perfects us as God’s people. We do not like this idea, but if it was true for Jesus, then it will have to be true for us. God has looked into the world, for a place to make his pure bride. Where will that place be? If we are made perfect through suffering, then we must look at the places which have suffered greatly for the sake of the Name, and few have suffered more than Africa.

I believe that this is because God wants to make Africa his pure bride, so that through her, he can bless the world.

If this is a right understanding then Africa has already endured two thousand years of suffering, because Africa stood beside Jesus in his time of need. This suffering has been part of the perfecting process. But God has been perfecting his suffering Africa, so that he can use her.

Suffering servant – the challenge of suffering

“Just as there were many who were appalled at him.”

* **Suffering is a powerful challenge to the rich and powerful.** They cannot understand where the strength comes from to endure the burden of suffering. They have trusted in the things of this world, which have no power to meet the challenge of suffering. They are “of all men most to be pitied.” (1 Corinthians 15:19). **Despite all that the powerful have done to Africa, they have not crushed the soul of Africa.** They have not broken the spirit of Africa. They have not destroyed God’s purposes for Africa. No matter how much they try, they cannot achieve it. They never will, for Africa is God’s suffering servant.

* **Suffering is a powerful challenge to unbelievers.** They cannot understand why we endure, and why we continue to believe in God who does not seem to have answered us. They are fools, saying in their heart **“there is no God.”** (Psalm 14:1) The patient endurance of the saints, and the refusal to let go of a God who has taken hold of us challenges them. It even frightens them. It reminds them that the gods of this world cannot ever blind our eyes. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

* **The challenge of suffering is hope for those who are suffering the pains and sorrows of life.** As they see in Africa a people unbowed and unbroken despite every attempt by man and demons, then they begin to hope that perhaps there is healing for their sorrow, and that their struggles are not in vain. We often overlook the powerful evangelistic thrust in a suffering people.

Suffering continent – the servant of the purposes of God

If Africa has been God’s suffering servant – why? What has all this preparation been for? Isaiah gives us the answer:

“Is it too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept? I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”
(Isaiah 49:6)

It is my conviction that God has been planning for two thousand years to pour his spirit into Africa and through Africa to many countries in the world. As he has watched his Africa people suffer, and endure, he has been shaping a people and a continent that can be the channel for his power.

But such power as he plans to release cannot be released into a confident, even over confident people. For then we would claim “Look at what great work

we are doing with God!” From this it is only a short step to “look at what great work I am doing, with God’s help” to “look at what great works I am doing.” God can only trust his mighty reviving power into a suffering servant – one who has learnt patience, obedience and submission to the purposes of God whatever that may mean. Such a people will say “look what God is doing to his own glory, and by the grace of God he is using us, his servants.”

What might God be planning to do through Africa? Nothing, if we cannot accept our position as the suffering servants of his will. Unless we can do this, we will only be like the Israelites –complaining and moaning against God throughout the wilderness wanderings. But if in our hearts we can accept this teaching, then there are exciting possibilities. The Bible teaches that the suffering servant, made perfect through his sufferings would restore, and bring light and salvation to the lost and dying world. This can only happen if the fire of revival breaks out in Africa to such an extent that those rivers begin to flow outward to the lost and dying Countries all around her. My own word suggests that this may be God’s purpose:

“In this continent” says the Lord, “I will show my power.

From here a river will begin to flow, to the North and to the South, to the East and to the West.

A river of cleansing for my broken and dying world.

Nations of the world will be blessed.”

The future for the suffering servant

The servant did not suffer in vain. By his sacrifice, the way was open for a mighty blessing to flow from the hand of God towards his creation – a blessing which was to find its first fulfilment in Jesus and its ultimate fulfilment in the return of Jesus and the restoration of all things to God.

I believe that God has a blessing planned for the world, of a similar proportion, which he will pour out through Africa, his suffering servant. It will not be like the former blessings (Isa.42:9) but a new and powerful flow of the Holy Spirit, touching Africa, and flowing out beyond.

God said to me concerning Africa:-

“But first my people must be cleansed, be filled with new power, with new fire.

The leaders of the Nations must be cleansed, and become the servants of the people they lead.

The leaders of the churches must be cleansed, and given the servant heart, the shepherd heart to feed and lead my people.

My people must be cleansed, and in confessing, I will fill the Churches with new fire, as has never been seen before.

Then the river will begin to flow.

I will send hundreds, thousands out from this Continent to bless, to heal, to intercede for my broken world. Come now to my cross. “

I do believe that God has been speaking to me. I do believe that Africa has been and still is his suffering servant. I believe that seeing the history of Africa in this way makes sense of so much, and points the way ahead to powerful, thrilling and dangerous times.

Dangerous? Yes, for if we look back over two thousand years, we can see that Satan will not let this new manifestation come unopposed. He has waged war on the soul of Africa, and he will continue to do so. False teaching, dishonest Pastors, immorality, false pride, anger, greed and jealousy will be sown among us, as he tries to deceive.

But the danger does not just come from the enemy. There is real danger in the powerful move of the spirit of God. All our falseness will be exposed. The light of the Holy Spirit will shine into many places that we might prefer to remain dark. But it cannot be so. If the channel is to be open, it must be pure.

Is God waiting to use his servant again?

Is this the time? Are we to be the generation to see what we have waited for and longed for? Here are some meditations to help us as we reflect on this question:-

“The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters, He restores my soul.” (Psalm 23: 1-3)

God loves his creation, and has good plans for it. Spend time thinking and praying about this, because the enemy has made the world seem a bad and negative place. He is lying, as usual.

“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

God is still in charge of his creation, planning good things for us. Ask God to reveal his plans for Africa to you.

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophesy.” (Acts 2:17-18)

God is waiting to anoint his people with power. Think and pray about what this might mean. Let the Holy Spirit examine your own heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the heart of your Nation. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the soul of Africa to you.

“Men of Galilee” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11)

Jesus is waiting to return, and is ready to pour out the Holy Spirit in preparation for his return. Pray and think about these things. Write down or carefully remember what he says to you.

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